



Kickstart for AlleghenyCONNECT

Discussions and Direction

The Advisory Team took the summary results from the compression planning session of November 2008 and created three large “buckets” in which to group its efforts:

- experiences for educators
- experiences for learners
- digital content

There have been some preliminary activities with each of these focus areas (highlighted in the “Did You Know”-style presentation to the AIU Superintendents Advisory Council).

At the August meeting of the Advisory Team, the following idea was proposed by the co-chairs and endorsed by the team: a “voucher” system that would provide funding for fees related to videoconferencing experiences in each of the districts that currently have the Polycom systems. The proposal requires that: a) the teacher wishing to use the system will first receive training, and b) the teacher will also provide an evaluation after the event has occurred. An incentive offer will be that each time an evaluation is completed, that district is entered into a monthly drawing for an additional “voucher”.

Simultaneously, there will be training provided for facilitating sessions using CONNECTLive (a desktop conferencing system, similar to Skype or Elluminate); and there will be a push to collect information from teachers who have already used the Polycom equipment for videoconferencing in the 2008-09 school year.

Digital Content is currently in discussions about virtual hosting for a Moodle server in partnership with IUs 11 and 27. At minimum, there will be a need for a Moodle server to host online courses from providers such as Florida Virtual and others. There is also a desire by the districts to minimize their costs related to online learning subscriptions. An attempt will be made to contract discounted service for Study Island, a resource for PSSA remediation used in nearly every AIU district. The next effort after that may be to contract for Questia, an online library of content, including thousands of textbooks, allowing a teacher to create a custom text to accompany their course.

TIMELINES

CONNECTLive

September 2009 – initial training as a “moderator” for CONNECTLive, facilitated by the vendor

October 2009 and ongoing – training in the use of CONNECTLive, conducted using the system, eliminating the need for face to face sessions

Videoconferencing

September through October 2009 – professional development for teachers in the use of the Polycom equipment and planning for a successful, integrated videoconferencing experience (conducted in small groups, using the equipment)

October 2009 and ongoing – “awareness” sessions for elementary schools with videoconference providers based on themes. Teachers would experience, along with their class, what a videoconference is and how it can be used as an instructional resource within the elementary curriculum.

November 2009 – additional professional development sessions in the use of and planning for videoconferencing (conducted in small groups, using the equipment)

TIMELINES

